



Sunni Papers Series 3

Intellectual Deceit: Tampering with Islamic Manuscripts at Institutes in Saudi Arabia

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Allah Most High has placed immense desirability in my heart for the biographies of the scholars of the two Holy Sanctuaries especially of those during the late Ottoman rule. This interest began when I first started to study the histories of the Majalis of `Ilm and Ijaza traditions of the Haramayn. As a student, I take keen interest in the chains of the Ulama particularly of this era. During my study of some manuscripts belonging to this era regarding the history of the Haramayn, I came across

some interesting manuscripts that I sighted at the Library of Makkah and then at al-Furqan Heritage House (Wimbledon, UK), an excellent institute that possesses the microfilm manuscript collection of Makkah Library. I came to tears when I discovered the following sad story of a manuscript and since then I have been deeply concerned about the preservation of original works in the Haramayn which I intend to share with all of my concerned Muslim brothers and sisters.

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A Heartbreaking Account of a Valuable Manuscript

*Nashr al-Nur wa al-Zahr fi Tarajim Afadhil Makkah min al-Qarn al-`Aashir Ila al-Qarn al-Rabi' `Ashar*¹ is viewed as the magnum opus for memoirs of five centuries of scholars in the Hijaz collated by Qadhi `Abdullah Mirdad Makki (1868 or 9-1924/ d.1343h). The author was appointed Qadhi of Makkah during the late rule of Muhammad `Ali Hussain Pasha and belonged to a well-known family of Ulama in Makkah. The author's father, Abul Khyar Ahmad Mirdad, was the chief head of the teachers and Imams of the Haram during his life. This monumental work is considered a sister of *al-`Iqd al-Thameen Fi Tarikh al-Balad al-Ameen* (8 vols) of Taqi al-Din al-Fasi (775-832/1373-1429) the largest work on the topic, in its richness and surpasses it for the following reasons, first that it cites unpublished and original primary sources, and secondly that there is a vast amount of detail on the scholarly contributions of women scholarship in the Hijaz that does not exist in *al-`Iqd al-Thameen*.

In 1947/1367 the manager of the Ministry of Education, Sheikh Muhammad bin Mani` organised a meeting and set up a committee to edit certain unpublished manuscripts on the history of Haramayn and publish them. The project was lead by the following persons:²

- Muhammad Sa'eed `Aamudi (d. 1990/1411), editor of *Sawt al-Hijaz* and monthly *Rabita al-Alam al-Islami*,
- Sulayman Sanee, director of the Haram Library in Makkah,
- Muhammad Hussain Naseef, a businessman in Jeddah and a religious and political Saudi figure,
- Rushdi Salih Malhas, editor of the monthly *Umm al-Qura* journal and author of *Tarikh al-Taba'ah wa al-Sahafah fi al-Hijaz*,
- `Umar `Abd al-Jabbar, chief police officer, chief director of Makkah post and historian,
- Ahmad Ali, a biographer of the family of Sa`ud, and
- `Abd al-Wahhab Dihalwi, who was appointed as the treasurer.

The committee decided to abridge and publish for the first time the enormous work of `Abdullah Mirdad too despite that Shaykh `Abdullah Gaazi had already abridged *Nashr al-Nur* calling it *Nazm al-Durar fi Ikhtisar Nashr al-Nur wa al-Zahr*, a manuscript the committee were aware of before embarking the task but continued to abridge the work suiting their personal biases. The former work remains in manuscript form. The original copy of Mirdad's *Nashr al-Nur* in the author's handwriting was held by `Abd al-Wahhab Dihalwi at his home near Safa in Makkah which he submitted to the committee for the project to commence. A second copy was prepared under the care of `Abdur Rahman Mu'allimi, the director of

¹ Its parallel title is *al-Durr al-Fakhir al-Maknun fi Tarajim Afadhil al-Khams al-Qurun*.

² The majority of these names are catalogued on the Library of Congress Authorities online.

Makkah Library. The committee agreed that they will not publish the work as it is and Muhammad `Aamudi and Ahmad `Ali were appointed to abridge and edit the entire work which took seven years now known as *al-Mukhtasar min Kitab Nashr al-Nur wa al-Zahr*³. Both of them acknowledge in the prolegomena of their abridged version of *Nashr al-Nur wa al-Zahr* first published by "al-Ta'if al-Adabi" in 1978/1398h in 2 volumes, an organisation supported by King Faisal ibn Fahd, **"we removed from it information that was useless and repetitive, stories and sayings that were baseless, and the excessive praise within it which made a major part of the work..."** that is to say that the mention of public Burdah gatherings, Mawlid and Majalis of Dala'il al-Khayrat which lasted up until the last years of Ottoman rule in the Haramayn, efforts of the Ahl al-Sunnah scholars in the preservation of Sufism in the Hijaz and numerous other crucial facts regarding the Ahl al-Sunnah history in al-Hijaz have been removed from the work.

I must point here that Gaazi had also annotated the original *Nashr al-Nur* in which he included the biographies of the 13th and early 14th century Hijri scholars that had not been entered in the original work to make it complete. This annotation remains also a manuscript and is titled *Nathr al-Durar fi Tazyeel al-Durar*. Muhammad `Ali Maghribi refers to this work in his *A'alam al-Hijaz*. A photocopy of this work is preserved at the Bahawuddin Zakariyya Library in Chakwal, Pakistan. The director of the aforementioned library suggests that

Gaazi's abridgement exists in the private libraries of `Abd al-Wahhab Dihawi, Muhammad Hussain Naseef, Muhammad `Ali Maghribi, and Dr. `Abd al-Wahhab Abu Sulayman, a Saudi academic who lectured at Umm al-Qura university in Makkah. Despite the fact that *Nashr al-Nur* had already been abridged by Gaazi and enriched, the committee continued their version of the abridgement.

After the committee produced the abridged version of *Nashr al-Nur* which has reshaped the entire work that can barely hold the same author's name anymore, **it declared the original manuscript was thereafter lost and a second copy of the original is non-extant**. In this abridgement, the lives of two prominent scholars of the Haramayn have been completely ignored, namely, Ahmad ibn Zayni Dahlan and Rahmatullah Keerwani, founder of Madrasa Sawlatiyya, whereas both were the leading scholarly authorities in Makkah in their eras and it would be extremely unlikely for them to be missing in the original. A second edition of the tampered work was published by "Alam al-Ma'rifah" at Jeddah in a single volume containing 641 pages (25 cm) under the supervision of Sayyid Muhsin Ahmad Barum in 1986/1406h. This edition makes two significant amendments among others, firstly, the names `Abd al-Nabiy and `Abd al-Rasul (both mean the Noble Prophet's servant) are changed to `Abd Rabb al-Nabiy with the word Rabb added in brackets between `Abd and al-Nabiy, secondly, whenever the author mentions someone visiting the "grave" of the

³ This title can be searched on WorldCat where one will find the two different editions I mention here. However, the book title on WorldCat is slightly different, that is *al-Mukhtasar min Kitab Nashr al-nawr wa-al-zahr*.

Noble Messenger (may Allah shower peace and blessings upon him) it is substituted with the word “masjid”. Both corruptions are based upon the Wahhabi theological positions that travelling to Madinah with the intention of visiting the grave of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah give him peace and blessings) is forbidden and calling oneself ‘Abd al-Nabi is *shirk*!

Tampering with Names

The addition of the word “rabb”, which I mentioned above, in the name of the famous muhaddith and faqih, ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Rasul is made by most Saudi scholars who adhere to Wahhabi ideology, and we can find this word added in original manuscripts to mention the *Thabat* of ‘Umar Abd al-Rasul, that is held at the library of Makkah in which someone has interrupted the original name by adding the word “rabb” with an arrow (this is what I saw with my eyes)! This change however now is being made without even placing brackets! Among prime examples is the recently published *al-Thabat al-Kabir* of Shaykh Hasan Mashat (may Allah have mercy on him) by al-Furqan Institute 2005, the editor of which is a Saudi scholar, Dr. Muhammad ibn ‘Ubayd ‘Abd al-Karim.

Our Responsiveness and Responsibility

What are we doing to bring such academic crime to an end when "ideological" committees corrupt works, claim to lose originals and still get away with it, and how? Have you thought: what is the future of the thousands of manuscripts on doctrinal issues held at King ‘Abdul ‘Aziz, Makkah, Umm al-Qura

and other Saudi library archives? And what is the future of the chronicles of the Muslims in al-Hijaz and their histories? How far will Wahhabi scholars go with tampering manuscripts in order to eliminate Ahl al-Sunnah traditions before them and for how long? Activities which I have illustrated above have washed away the integrity, reliability, accuracy and authority of print copies of texts published in Saudi Arabia, at least for me, not perhaps in their totality but certainly the works attributed to scholars of up until the decline of the Ottomans in the Haramayn and doctrinal texts that are problematic to Wahhabi thought.

I am overjoyed to hear from our teacher, ‘Allamah al-Sayyid Muhammad Abul Huda al-Ya‘qoubi, that he has raised the awareness of these activities in the scholarly circles of Damascus, Syria. He, may Allah preserve him and grant him good health, informed me in his last visit that he issued a verdict against this activity. May Allah Most High reward him the best in both worlds.

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